



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1993 Volume II: Folktales

Choose Your Path

Guide for Curriculum Unit 93.02.06
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Choose Your Path is a fifth to sixth grade teaching unit based upon European, African-American and African folktales. In these tales the main characters take the initiative and use their wits to stay alive and find happiness. In addition to teaching critical thinking, public speaking, and writing skills, this unit purports to pass this self-empowering message along to the oncoming generation.

The unit is divided into three parts centering on three general types of fairy tales. The first part studies several versions of "Little Red Riding Hood." These tales warn of dangers and illustrate the consequences of not following good advice. In some versions, however, the heroine is able to save herself by being smarter than the wolf. The second part centers on the Cinderella tales. Here the main character perseveres, is helped by friends and takes advantage of opportunities. The final group of fairy tales has an enterprising hero who must outwit a giant, the devil or a monster to gain riches, a bride or safety. In these tales the hero must prove himself not once but time and again before he earns happiness.

As for teaching strategies, the unit begins by focusing on critical thinking skills as the similar stories are compared. A written assignment follows, but with the African tale "The Three Rival Brothers" the students are in cooperative learning groups preparing a debate on which brother deserves the chief's daughter. Each student's public speaking skills are further exercised by story telling activities. Finally, their creative writing skills are honed as the students use the comic examples of Moms Malbey and James Thurber as models to write their own fairy tales.

(Recommended for Reading, Language Arts and Drama, Grades 5-6)

Key Words

Afro-American Folktales

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